Anorexic Becomings, Valerie McLaren © 2018

Published and designed by Jamie Berrout

Cover Images: Front: Alfred Stieglitz, "Grass" (1933). Art Institute of Chicago; Back: Frederick H. Evans, "Dandelions." (1900s–1920s). Met Museum.

BOOKLET ISSUE #6 featuring Valerie McLaren's *Anorexic Becomings* was printed and bound in October 2018 in an edition of 125 copies. Digital versions of this text are available to readers at no cost at patreon.com/transwomenwriters

ANOREXIC BECOMINGS

Valerie McLaren

A CONVERSATION ON VALERIE MCLAREN'S *ANOREXIC BECOMINGS*

Jamie Berrout (Editor): As I started reading the zine I was struck by your use of the word we in that opening note where you wrote "through which we attempt to theorize… a point of mobilization...." My first thought was something like, "Damn, did I not notice there's a co-author to this text?" There isn't.

But there's definitely a collective voice, a *we*, speaking here because you're borrowing from different texts, you're bringing in these different voices into conversation with each other, so there's a multiplicity to the narrative voice of the zine that maybe we can connect to the anorexic project. This shifting and resistance to permanence as an expression of the refusal to be known, domesticated, and made a subject which you talk about.

The other thing I thought about with that we was you might have been playing with putting on one of those distinct voices, like the *we* of the communiqué issued from the revolutionary front or, even better, the *we* of the detached clinician or researcher gazing at their lowly patient-subjects.

Valerie McLaren (Author): Well like one thing that I think is central in the zine is like, how texts created across different times and contexts can interact directly, an unwitting process of intersection and conversation. I just find it fascinating that there is this definite continuity of ideas and feeling that exists across time and location. The catch, however, is that this appropriation of words & ideas to create/assemble this conversation necessitates a sort of exegesis, an intervention to bring the texts together, like the role of a facilitator or director. Creating the situations through which texts interact and pull ideas from each other is one purpose of the 'we'. I attempt to create a sort of unity of thought through which contradictions and conflicts in ideas can be worked through and developed.

Of the many reasons for the 'we', the most obvious one to me at the time of writing was that the anorexic body, and therefore its project, is not singular. It is an assemblage of experiences and lives, and needs to constantly be changing, be multiplicitous, to be viable. The anorexic project is never stable, constantly shifting, operating across all sorts of battlefields. Becoming-anorexic involves a necessary becoming-imperceptible, for the anorexic body is marginal, under constant surveillance by Biopower, unpredictability is its only advantage. The idea of becoming-imperceptible relates to what you called the 'resistance to permanence', which I feel runs throughout the text, evident from the first glance at the title. *Becomings* entail constant change, it envisions becoming as a process that never truly ends, must shift incessantly towards a goal, in this case, the destitution of the Body. This resistance to permanence intersects with the text's refusal to be known, the anorexic project must be illegible to the scribes of power. Foucault believed that to be known/labeled/recorded is to be a viable subject of power, and following him, we must move in the shadows, constantly

changing, to escape the vice grip of Power.

When you're anorexic/body dysmorphic you never really see your own body, you're seeing all the bodies you aren't and the image of every body you want to be. Forming a cohesive 'I' out of such a jumbled sense of self is nigh impossible, hence the scarcity of self-reflection in the text, assembled speedily in a bout of honesty in the confessional passage. I haven't been able to go back and edit that passage since I wrote it for fear of deleting it, honestly. Exposure is so scary, and I think besides the theoretical value of the subversive 'we', it serves to make writing easier, to form a certain detachment from the intensely personal/real situation at hand. The use of a multiplicity of voices serves as a sort of evasive maneuver, however, it is an evasive maneuver against the reader. To truly be known, even by the reader of my writing, is scary, honestly. The use of other voices than my own allows a certain truth to leak through, obscured and interjected by the many other voices. In a way, the voices serve as a sort of shield, sanifying real experience so that it can be expressed. Expression without sanification is almost impossible in my opinion, and the use of voices and other people's words allows a certain control of that inevitable sanification.

The 'we' serves another purpose, it uses the 'we; as an invitation, it includes the reader, and provokes identification with the text. When I say "our project", I include the reader in the shaping of the anorexic project, however, the 'we' is also used to implicate the reader, "Than we'd like to admit" directly addresses the reader's preconceptions, draws connections not previously existent. It directly addresses the reader, provokes thought on the nature of one's community and its attitudes towards the living. I draw an unfavourable comparison between trans politics and Christianity to confront the reader, confront the circles I find myself in.

I really like what you've said about putting on a voice, it brings in an influence that doesn't figure directly in the text but shaped its creation. The construction of a voice is epitomised, in my opinion, by Valerie Solanas in the SCUM Manifesto, in which she manipulates language through, as put by Avital Ronell, "the noncanonised tropes of moaning and bitching." Valerie Solanas weaponises the authorial voice against the forces of patriarchy & male society, subverting and manipulating men's rules for female expression against their originators. Solanas' use of language to destitute power is echoed in Anorexic Becomings, the use of the confessional tone in the passage beginning "when i purge" serves to admit to unforgivable sin, violating the rules of both embodiment and expression, the Anorexic-Transsexual speaks.

I think the subversion of a specific voice, be it the use of the confessor to confess to the socially illegible, or the borrowing of academic and medical language in order to turn the violence it inflicts back on itself serves a powerful role. It allows many sorts of immanences to emerge from one text, located within many different situations and experiences. I feel the voice of the Researcher allows a point of grounding, as we must first find where we stand in the world we oppose to effectively destroy it. The citation of medical journals and medical language establishes how society attempts to produce and understand us and therefore provides perspective. It's almost like how Tiqqun consult US counter-insurgency to inform their praxis, the enemy's thoughts and strategies are crucial in forming an imperceptible resistance. If going into the voice of the Researcher we must go into the words it utters, specifically the definition of anorexia. The terms by which the classification of anorexics occurs expose our status in the eyes of power, our "refusal" to perform a viable Body explicitly condemned, through a combination of

infantilization and misogyny, a sort of implicit expectation of Young-Girlitude. The figures of the Academic and that of the Researcher serve the same purpose, the Researcher's biases and motivations are weaponised against it, just as the expectation of Truth from the mouth of the Academic is subverted by the use of the misquote, "to misquote Kate Bornstein." A lot of us depend on the voice of the academic to define our trans reality, I've defined my transhood by Judith Butler or Kate Bornstein's seal of real trans embodiment, this is not helpful. To be properly existent, trans people need to define our own realities. The misquote redefines the academic as a source of inspiration instead of an arbiter of reality, it undercuts the power of the academic through appropriation and reuse. The figure of the academic is a tool, to illuminate and understand the anorexic body, the transsexual body, the marginal body, whatever theoretical leaps that requires. Self-understanding is the obvious route to a self-aware praxis and this is achieved through subversion of those who strive to define and label us

Jamie: You've given us a lot of really vital things to talk about, and I just want to touch on something that came to mind when you were describing the anorexic project and becoming-imperceptible. It's that recently I watched a lecture/discussion with Fred Moten and Saidiya Hartman called *The Black Outdoors*, where Hartman in particular was talking about petit marronage as the flight from slavery into a condition of stateless freedom, which didn't just involve a singular act of running away from the slave owner and the state but also the endless practice of evading detection and the creation of their own maroon communities. And there's evidence these communities were truly communal, based not on capitalism but on their own traditions and beliefs from the African continent.

Hartman talks about how there were escaped slaves that remained in forests near the plantation close enough where they could still reach and aid their families in captivity but where they themselves might be captured, and how they were forced to live without leaving any trace of human inhabitation, that some maroons she read about had lived in the trunks of trees and of course they could make no permanent settlements. And she connects these acts of marronage (escape from slavery + movement toward a new way of living with others) to the broader tradition of "experiments in living" by black activists across the world: collective mutual aid and self-defense efforts (the Black Panther Party and MOVE are prominent examples), which are heavily surveilled and constantly broken up by the state and denied permanence, but which always re-emerge in new forms, at least in spirit.

So I think there are interesting parallels with petit marronage and the anorexic project, both in that they have these evasive maneuvers in common but also in their radical potential. Like the way you talk about purging as "a starting point for a new liberatory praxis" that may also squandered as a leading back to a cycle of life as it has been, this feels a lot like marronage in that some of the larger efforts resulted in the creation of states that then became violence themselves. (Hartman herself at one point says, in the context of grand marronage, "State forms scare me.")

I know you didn't touch directly on race as it constitutes/relates to gender or domestication and civilization but I was wondering how your sense of race, the reading you've done and your experiences, might have informed the zine.

Valerie: The discussion is brilliant, and has given me a lot of points of connection and lines of flight to discuss. When Hart-

man I think talks about "headless societies" I see a parallel between abolishing the head of a social formation and the urge to exist without a body that Moten refers to, "outside even of the desire for a body." The abolition of the head and the body leaves the spirit. The idea of the spirit as a pure essence unfettered by the terrestrial is expressed in the urge to wither-away, a secession from the physical. There is a sense that evasion, living outside the World, is somehow inherently communal, the constant flight from capital and totality prevents its social relations from reforming, constant movement and change sabotages the calcification of capital in daily life. Certain indigenous communities described by Clastres featured a sort of ritual to purge power, in which physical possessions and social relations were in a sense, refreshed, the head and the body demolished momentarily. This demolition of the body must not be seen, however, it must be imperceptible, the body becomes momentarily derelict. The purge manifests across experiments in living, the rewilding impulse of secession from civilisation connecting with the sense of constant evasion one finds in living blackness.

Being black one has a sense of being constantly hunted, detection is often fatal. The police, the government, the spectre of racialisation, all are constantly around the corner; shrinking one's presence, not "talking back", all comes down to an always-already failed attempt to not exist. This impossibility of existing while black brings one back to Hartman, describing it as "living in an uninhabitable world", so brutal that we must create outsides, no matter how short lived, without leaving a trace. This brutality also manifests in the seemingly inevitable finitude of said outsides, power leaks back in. You always eventually have to eat, to return to the World, if only to cement your resistance to it. This brutal finitude either results in the return to past cycles or a repetition of the cycle, there is never

a true release, but we keep trying. Hartman's reference to the return to an inside, even a new one, in grand marronage, which you mention when you talk about her statement that "state forms scare" her, expresses the fatalistic nature of the cycle. The finitude of the experiments in living, however, doesn't matter, because after all, as Moten says, they exist outside ordinary spacetime, a year can be infinity. The value of the instant of secession cannot be reduced to numbers and coordinates, scale and duration are secondary to the transcendental experience of true freedom. The urge to create an impossible outside is in a sense, a deathwish. Cleaver derisively refers to James Baldwin's secession from the heterosexual contract, and thus reproductive futurism, as a deathwish, going so far as to say that "[T]he racial deathwish is manifested as the driving force in [Baldwin]." After all, existence without existence is impossible, and nonexistence is death. Is it? Black existence and the anorexic project problematise the terms of existence, call into question the basest assumptions of embodiment, envision a self outside the self, an empty Body, a headless, bodiless essence, timeless and imperceptible. Forms-of-life outside Life manifest, however briefly, and offer eternity.

Jamie: It's interesting that we're having this discussion in a moment that resonates so strongly with these questions. Two days ago we saw news headlines about how Trump wants to "write trans people out of existence" (by defining sex narrowly in federal administrative law, so that trans people cannot invoke those laws, cannot locate themselves in federal administrative statutes to be recognized by them, which is a prerequisite to accessing the protections and benefits they might confer) and the predictable reaction by organized trans people in the hashtag #WontBeErased and the panicked writing we're seeing this

week about how, actually, trans people do exist.

But, even as a cisgender man, Moten knows a lot about embodiment and visibility and recognition that these trans activists don't. I keep thinking about that part where he's talking about his reading of Hortense Spillers' *Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe* and he says, "Fuck a body. Don't want one. Aint got one, don't want one. No such thing, anyway." And he makes it clear that he's saying this in a literal, personal sense in addition to the theoretical; he's saying it in essentially the same way as every trans person who has ever had a blog, that cry of, "Get me out of here!"

So the desire for trans recognition, to be seen by the state and everyone around us, feels very strange. I mean, yeah, you need to be recognized by the federal government in order to access things like a passport, Medicaid (government funded insurance), and protections for trans students. But recognition is also a prerequisite for violence, right? It feels like we're locked into a struggle that can't be won on this terrain. Though, it's not obvious what we should be doing outside of this struggle for recognition/rights/existence. Like, for me, my heart goes to the anorexic project, the deathwish, and a refusal to be destroyed in the struggle for recognition. But would trans women of color be able to survive that? Would the kinds of mutual aid networks we'd need in order to survive a world in which we're categorically denied passports and Medicaid and basic civil rights guarantees spring up to provide for us? What would happen if trans people suddenly decided to disengage and wither away, out from capital and its social relations to the extent possible, to pursue radical projects, to devote our energy to each other, to cultivate our monstrous selves and refuse recognition?

I suspect readers may think that we're straying into wildly unrealistic propositions, that we're being naive by moving from

theory to practice, but believing that the current struggle is going anywhere feels so much more unrealistic and deadly to me. It comes down to this for me: here in Philadelphia, there are white and Asian trans women who are having some success, they're doing shows and readings and publishing books, they're moving here and finding themselves through their quirky adventures in the city like something out of a polyamorous romcom. I moved here with some of those pretensions too. At the same time, though, a black trans woman named Shantee Tucker was murdered here in September. I feel myself caught in the tension between these two extremes like never before, and I feel more and more that life can't go on as it has.

It's as if the gains some of us are having at this moment of glaring visibility are at the expense of an increased vulnerability for those who cannot be so easily assimilated into the normative life of the city. I know that I'm failing in my role as interviewer by lingering on this topic, but it's something I haven't been able to get past. This sense that our familiar everyday life is the violent fantasy and that whatever awaits us outside of this in the fugitive space—once we stop playing these games that politics and activism has locked us into—is life itself, or at least life worth living. What's the view like from the UK? I've read some reports that make me think it's been a similar story this past year in terms of visibility/recognition.

Valerie: Beginning with the hot button issue, the problem with the proposal to "write trans women out of existence" is that we already exist too much, any black trans woman knows that we are already fatally visible. The activist urge to truly exist in the eyes of Power expressed in #WontBeErased misses the point that visibility is killing us, the 50 black trans women killed

seemingly every year die of overvisibility, of being recognised as a trans subject (an illegible one) and punished for it. This intersection of blackness and transness is where we find the blinding glare of visibility most purely expressed, every action of the black trans woman is surveilled, closely regulated. The constant awareness of surveillance and the terms of existence directly within the gaze of power are seen in blackness at large, Moten's experience of blackness leads to an understanding that assimilation, existence under the close watch of society, is spiritual poison. It kills your essence, the only alternative for both the trans and black subject is total escape. "Get me out of here!" and "fuck a body" express the same transcendental urge, an escape from even a body. A through-line is created between the blogger and the academic, a commonality of thought is established.

I really resonate with your feelings on the desire to be seen by the state, there's a definite sense that this desire is short-sighted, we already know where visibility leads, the state wants us dead. This activism-toward-death is a misdirected fatalism that contrasts the anorexic deathwish. Becoming-imperceptible is necessarily contrasted by becoming-martyr, the desire to be seen is the desire to be immortalised, a rejection of the temporary, a futile attempt at eternity. The desire to be visible is a malformed iteration of the anorexic project. It is a tragically masochistic response to a reality in which recognition means violence. It is a far more involved project to escape, networks, systems of support, don't spring whole from the earth, they must be built. The job of a self-aware practice is to make the impossible more possible, to create the real structures that make escape from the real feasible. This escape from the real must be grounded in the present, the existent. Solanas' text again resonates here, The SCUM Manifesto's last quarter is

essentially a departure from the scathing immanent critique of the rest of the text, it speculates on the future, disconnecting critique from the real it opposes. Solanas' exercise in speculative fiction is where the text falters, losing its grounding in the present and existent, losing the incisive quality that the rest of the text has in spades.

Jumping to what you say about the double-sidedness of visibility, I'd say that the system of visibility and recognition is only possible through the duplicity of the visible, the existence of the figure of the white trans poet is enabled by annihilation of the black trans name on a list, relentlessly watched. This double-sidedness has been quite evident over here, the publicity stunt/hate crime by #GetTheLOut (in which they led the London pride parade with anti-trans messages for around 10 minutes) weaponises the violence of visibility, the visibility of the cis lesbian is produced directly through the malicious visibility leveled on the trans lesbian, again surveilled, watched for evidence of being a male infiltrator. The campaign was a response, I think, to the GRA Reform, which proposed many quality of life improvements for trans people, released for public feedback through a very long survey. In response to this unprecedented opportunity for trans acceptance by the state, a massive activist response was rallied, GRA Consultation events nearly daily. The GRA thing has sort of reflected this prevailing idea (in activist spaces at least) that filling out surveys and petitions is praxis, that recognition in the eyes of the state is one step to a better tomorrow. This adherence to the terms of the state is a sort of provisional assimilation, popping up again quite recently with the release of a full-page advertisement in Metro by a TERF group, seen by millions on their daily commute. The response to this was led by a coalition of activist groups, a fundraising campaign to also put an ad in the Metro,

debunking TERF talking points. The point here is that assimilation is inherent to warfare in the terrain of the visible, the protest, the magazine ad, they all appeal to visibility, being seen is their primary purpose. Visible warfare can only exist on the terms of capital, must be legible. This hyperreal praxis attempts to escape the violence and cruelty of war in the real by delving deeper into it. Instead of producing our own hormones, we petition the state to allow it to us, instead of creating networks of defense, we lobby for hate crime legislation, delving us deeper and deeper into the gaze of power, all while we are still being hunted.

ANOREXIC BECOMINGS

A ZINE ABOUT ANOREXIA AND UN-WOMANHOOD

note 1: the focus of this zine is not recovery, struggles with recovering from eating disorders have been documented and are easily located. the focus of this zine is finding meaning in the experiences contained within anorexia and bulimia, through which we attempt to theorize, in the vein of deleuze & guattari's schizoanalysis, a point of mobilisation located within anorexic subjectivities.

note 2: by the use of the term "un-women", i do not mean men or nonbinary people but lesbians and trans women — subjects whose existences render an unproblematic identification with womanhood impossible.

“Why do so many transgender people have eating disorders?”

- we propose that aside from the obvious social factors, there is a meta-physical commonality between anorexia and transgender experience - demonstrated by tenuous relationships with embodiment, physical space, and most importantly, control

Anorexia as THE WILL TO MASTERY

The anorexic brings the will to mastery to bear upon her body, for she cannot bring it to bear upon the rest of the world

- **HAVE YOU** vomited or taken laxatives within the past 30 days or used weight loss to suppress secondary sexual characteristics ?

“transgender people are now suffering from [eating disorders] at higher rates than cisgender straight women.”

Findlay, & Johnson, 2015; Evan, Middleman, & Feldman, 2014). All three case studies suggest interaction between eating disorder symptomology and gender identity such that the individuals described used eating disorder symptomology to control their physical shape to be more in line with their gender identity (Algars et al, 2012;Couturier et al., 2014). These

S A
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ANOREXIA

+

TRANSGENDER MARTYRDOM

AND THE VALORIZATION OF DEATH

Christian Martyrdom and Radical Martyrdom Have More in Common Than We'd Like to Admit

Transgender and Christian politics focus on the dead because we have been conditioned to believe we are incapable of having value in the present — a rapture is always around the corner, be it Judgement Day or the ever-imminent state of Passing.

> **"The suppression of physical urges and basic feelings — fatigue, sexual drive, hunger, pain — frees the body to achieve heroic feats and the soul to commune with god."**

(Wolff *et al.*, 1990), anorexia is currently defined as

1. a refusal to maintain a 'normal' body weight with body weight at least 15% below that expected (either because of weight loss or lack of expected weight gain);
2. an intense fear of gaining weight or becoming fat despite being

underweight;
3. body image distortion, 'feeling fat' and overvaluation of thinness;
4. a reduction of food intake, avoidance of 'fattening foods', often with extensive exercise, self-induced vomiting, laxative or diuretic abuse so as to achieve the weight loss and maintain a low body weight.

Anorexia as Urge to Triumph Over External Nature

Control/Restricting as Symbolic Rejection of the Body, the Desire to Change it

(In Line With Gender or Whatever Else)

> "You know it's not actually a solution (.) unless you actually kill yourself."

> "The death of the anorexic [...] sanctions her final victory over her body, over the world"

The urge to radically alter the body; to ultimately *dissociate oneself from it*

> **"The body has been made so problematic for women that it has often seemed easier to shrug it off and travel as a disembodied spirit."**

I am trying
very hard
to live outside my body

Anorexia is a protest against, a well as a restatement of, oppression

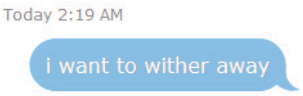
Anorexia is not inherently liberatory — it originates in a markedly un-free environment — but contains within it the seeds of a liberatory praxis, one of total reappropriation of the body away from gender & otherness.

FOR THE TRANSGENDERED SUBJECT, ANOREXIA EMERGES AS MANIFESTATION OF:

FOR THE TRANSGENDERED SUBJECT, ANOREXIA EMERGES AS MANIFESTATION OF:

FOR THE TRANSGENDERED SUBJECT, ANOREXIA EMERGES AS MANIFESTATION OF:

A REAL DESIRE FOR TRANS (IN)VISIBILITY
I DON'T WANT TO BE SEEN BY SOCIETY
I DON'T WANT TO EXIST AS A SPECTACLE, A TRANNY TO GAWK AT



"whithering away" as the specifically anorexic reformulation of Imaginary-Partisan secession

Sappho by Starvation

The anorexic transsexual body as the terrain of civil war

The transsexual pressure to shrink, expressed in anorexia, is a direct response to the cultural conception of trans women as the phallus-embodiment formalised by Raymond. The transphobic image of the transsexual as an infiltrator, a male interloper, is internalised and neutralised by the figure of the Transsexual-Anorexic, withering-away into marginality and invisibility.

Anorexia as a form of transition serves to destroy the male-read body by succumbing to a traditionally female illness/state-of-being, reducing the phallus-expectation inherent to the expectation of legible manhood to a relic, this echoes the pathologization of transsexuality as psychopathia transsexualis, a medicalised negation of subjecthood recalling female hysteria. Transsexual embodiment is seen as a threat to the national body, the correct and legible Healthy body. Transsexual infiltration anxiety forms the basis of a social quarantine, defending the authentic, healthy female body against the ontological death perceived in unintelligible gender performances. Reduction to an artifact symbolises death, the 'authentic female' exposed as mere parody. Cisgender women's stable identification with womanhood and female-ness is built on the exclusion and social deaths of both the figures of the Transsexual and the Anorexic.

"All transsexuals rape women's bodies by reducing the real female form to an artifact"

Unlike mainstream Freudian readings, we do not see the phallus as simply the symbolic form of the penis, but a state of being, a social status, a form-of-life. Echoing Derrida, and later, Butler, we assert that the phallus is not a part of a body sexed as male, but a symbolic embodiment of male domination. The gendered regime's impulse to control, to penetrate internalities is contained within the phallus. Phallogos, or the phallus-as-symbol, is anticipated by transphobic anxieties about transsexual penetration into cisgender communities expressed in Raymond's treatise on gender, *The Transsexual Empire*.

> "Because transsexuals have lost their physical 'members' does not mean that they have lost their ability to penetrate women — women's mind, women's space, women's sexuality"

Janice Raymond is correct when she says trans women perform and reproduce a male-designed *pastiche* of womanhood. This selfsame pastiche she decries, however, is universal to those subjected as women. 'Womanhood itself is pastiche', says Butler. The analysis of womanhood-as-pastiche allows an appropriation of Raymond's work as a lens through which to view gender. Her analysis of the female condition as an exclusively transsexual phenomenon results in a figurative hamstringing of her theory, its potential for insight into the nature of unwomanhood remaining tragically unrealised. Raymond's insistence on the existence of a "real female form" blinds her to the fact that womanhood is the larva-stage of the "tragic caricature of the disconnected, self-sufficient female" that forms the figure of the Anorexic.

The ribs of the anorexic expose the construction of subjected bodies — starving-machines, continually breaking down and repairing themselves

a whistling, throbbing engine
straining forward with no intent
just waiting for the fuel to deplete

The ribs of the cisgender-anorexic are an endpoint, a desire/need to prove an existence | The ribs of the transgender-anorexic are an obstacle, a point past which one can cease to be embodied and consumed

"THE WAY TO BE THE YOUNG-GIRL IS TO BE *NOTHING*."

The anorexic project stems from the dissociation of human from environment, nature from culture, so the revolutionary implications of anorexic-informed praxis are the destruction of all that produces it. A self-aware anorexic practice necessitates the disruption and de-stabilisation of the body — the anorexic project is a purely negative one, for the destruction of identity in favour of infinite becomings, beginning with a becoming-anorexic. A self-abolitionist analysis towards the utter destitution of The Body.

OUR PROJECT ENTAILS THREE THINGS:

1. The destruction of all mirrors — an end to self-surveillance.
2. A radical overturning of all this civilization's foundational dichotomies, nature/culture - self/other - male/female.
3. Revolution — Anorexic Style Now!

TRANSITION as UTTER SELF-NEGATION IN PURSUIT OF ACTUALISATION

I WOULD RATHER STARVE THAN CONTINUE A LIFE OF

- ACCOMODATION
- COMPROMISE
- DOMESTICATION
- POLITICAL WEAPONISATION

The purge as total liquidation of the existent, a futile yet radical rejection of the state of things

a futile mass of energy
an atomic bomb of marrow and endocrine

I wish for it to go off
so my electric flashes of consciousness
return untethered to forever

To misquote Kate Bornstein, "Vomiting can be seen not so much as a sign of revulsion as an upheaval of gender identity and sexual orientation"

When i purge, i expel not only food and fluids but a coerced, inauthentic, alienated self, for a brief moment i am freed from gender - however, still subsumed within it it, there is no doubt that my illness is caused by structural domination and cultivation, but - through an intensely physical exegesis i attempt to purge myself of the shackles of domestication and gender-as-domestication. This may be seen as idealistic but the experience of purging, preceded by bingeing, has subversive potential; through an intensely *spiritual* purging one may secede from this culture of death organized with all the appearances of life. In this same vein, a self-crit, in the maoist sense, appears as a purging of sin, confessional booths serve the same function, if for a less liberatory purpose. The rejection

and decoupling of oneself from guilt, be it from eating, thinking counterrevolutionary thoughts, the failure to conform to ecclesiastical expectation, serves a liberatory function in that it allows us to approach a life from a fresh perspective. Often this opportunity is squandered, returning to a cycle of bingeing and purging, committing fresh sin, but the potential to create something new, to imagine and put into practice new forms of life, is ever-present in the wake of these ritual cleansings. The purge serves as a starting point for a new liberatory praxis.

- other examples of purge-as-ritual
    - the purging of undesired hormones through blockers, allowing the adoption of new forms of embodiment
    - the loss of bonds and relationships as a result of social transition, a secession from cisgender society
    - lesbian separatism, a rejection of men and simultaneously the foundational myths of patriarchal civilization

I am trying –
very hard
– to live outside my body

this stiff hunk of flesh
this slowly decomposing corpse
that hums with cells and fat and mild, mild disease

a whistling, throbbing engine
straining forward without intent
just waiting for the fuel to deplete

bloated, amorphous, drooping
a futile mass of energy
an atom bomb of marrow and endocrine

I wish for it to go off
so my electric flashes of consciousness
return – untethered – to forever

— a. h. wells

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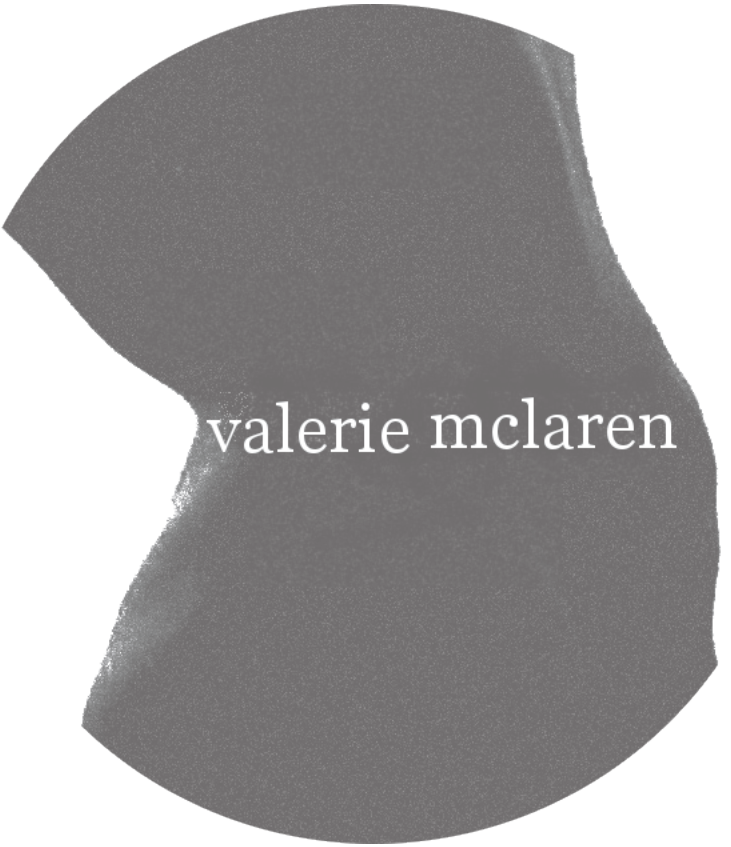
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